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GOVERNOR DAVIS SIGNS HISTORIC HOUSING BOND, ANNOUNCES ACTIONS TO CURB HOMELESSNESS

SACRAMENTO – Concluding a daylong “Governor’s Summit on Homelessness,” Governor Gray Davis today signed legislation to put a \$2.1 billion housing bond on the November 2002 ballot and announced other initiatives designed to reduce homelessness.

“You can’t reduce homelessness without new homes,” Governor Davis said. “This measure represents the largest housing bond in California history. It will appear on our fall statewide ballot. We need it and I urge every voter in California to help pass it.”

SB 1227 by Senate President pro Tempore John Burton (D-San Francisco) authorizes the \$2.1 billion general obligation bond to be placed on the November 2002 ballot. If approved by the voters, it will provide \$195 million for the Emergency Housing Assistance Program and invest another \$195 million into supportive housing for families who are moving from emergency shelters or who are at risk for homelessness. The measure also includes:

- \$910 million for the Multifamily Housing Program;
- \$200 million for the Joe Serna, Jr. Farmworker Housing Grant Program;
- \$205 million for the CalHome Program;
- \$5 million for code enforcement programs administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development;
- \$100 million for the Jobs Housing Balance Program; and
- \$290 million allocated to the California Housing Finance Agency’s California Homebuyer Downpayment Assistance Program.

After listening to three Summit panels on the causes of and solutions to the problem of homelessness, the Governor also announced three State initiatives to help prevent the cycle of homelessness, including new assistance for California’s homeless veterans and youth.

“As a veteran myself, combating homelessness among veterans is more than just a policy to me - it’s a personal commitment,” said the Governor, as he announced that the State would provide assistance to community outreach efforts aimed at providing services to homeless veterans.

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“Every month, ‘stand downs’ are held in various locations across the state. They provide veterans with food, clothing and basic medical care. They’re not a long-term solution, but they are excellent outreach tools that help to direct homeless veterans to treatment, job training and other assistance programs. I’m directing the Department of Veterans Affairs to increase the State’s contribution to these stand downs.”

To assist teens and young adults, the Governor announced that he is directing the Governor’s Office on Service and Volunteerism (GO SERV) to develop a new pilot program aimed at recruiting emancipated foster kids and runaway youth into the AmeriCorps program and the California Conservation Corps.

“These programs provide a living stipend, the potential for job training and education, mentoring, the opportunity to serve, and, most important, a place to belong,” Governor Davis said.

Noting that integration of services is a key element in combating the problem of homelessness, the Governor also announced that new local planning grants would be available to assist local governments in developing their own integrated homeless service model. He also offered to provide State and local officials who have experience building successful programs to give technical assistance and advice to other communities that want to learn what works.

In his closing remarks, Governor Davis said he considered the close of the Summit the start of a new statewide commitment to combating homelessness.

“We’re not going to be able to solve the problem of homelessness overnight,” Governor Davis said. “Progress will come slowly and incrementally. But I’m not going anywhere. I’m prepared to keep working on this problem until every Californian has a place to call home.”

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